

## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

### SS Philip and James Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Navigation Way Oxford OX2 6AB

**Current SIAMS inspection grade**

**Good**

**Diocese**

**Oxford**

Previous SIAMS inspection grade

Outstanding

Local Authority

Oxfordshire

Date of inspection

31 January 2018

Date of last inspection

18 March 2013

Type of school and unique reference number

Voluntary Aided Primary School 123214

Headteacher

Sarah Awuye

Inspector's name and number

Janet Northing 792

#### School context

SS Philip and James is a two form entry primary school with 416 pupils currently on roll. Approximately half the pupils are from a White British background. This is lower than the national average. The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is significantly higher than other schools nationally. Due to its location near Oxford University, pupil mobility is above the national average. The number of pupils entitled to pupil premium funding is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with a special educational need or disability is in line with the national average. The headteacher joined the school in September 2017.

#### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of SS Philip and James as a Church of England school are good

- Christian values of love, compassion and community lie at the heart of this inclusive church school and impact positively on its communal life.
- Links with St. Margaret's Church contribute well to the distinctive Christian character of the school and collective worship enriching the lives of pupils and their families.
- Collective worship is valued by members of the school community and contributes to the school's Christian ethos through biblical teaching and the celebration of Christian festivals.
- Religious education (RE) supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development and makes a positive contribution to the Christian character and values of the school.

#### Areas to improve

- Include all stakeholders in creating an inclusive vision for the school that celebrates its Christian distinctiveness and rich diversity to inspire and shape its future strategic direction.
- Secure the impact of the Christian vision through a more systematic and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's Christian distinctiveness, collective worship and RE. Ensure that all stakeholders are involved, including governors.
- With support from the diocese and clergy, put in place a theologically informed interpretation of spirituality to deepen the spiritual life of the school community. Apply this to policy and practice when identifying high quality experiences for prayer and reflection within collective worship, the school environment and the curriculum as a whole.
- Establish consistently high expectations in the recording of RE as a core subject to clearly evidence progression across the school and demonstrate full coverage of the syllabus.

### **The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good at meeting the needs of all learners**

The positive impact of the Christian ethos on this school community is clearly expressed by one of the youngest pupils, 'Classes are like our family for the day.' In addition, pupils are able to make clear links between the school's Christian values of love, compassion and community, and biblical events and stories. For example, a pupil in Year 3 explained how, 'God's sending of Jesus Christ into the world shows us what love is like.' In talking about compassion, a Year 2 pupil used the example of the forgiving father in the parable of the prodigal son. Older pupils chose the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand to illustrate the importance of community and caring for others. Pupils are also able to apply these values to their own behaviour expressed in terms of being kind and caring towards others. Relationships between all members of the school community are positive. Staff speak of feeling valued and supported in their varying roles. As a consequence of the nurturing Christian environment academic achievement is in line with or above national expectations in maths and reading. This includes vulnerable pupils who access pastoral support from a home school link worker. She carries out home visits and enables them to find a 'place to be' in school. In addition, a part-time transition lead supports pupils and their families through times of change. These initiatives, underpinned by the school's Christian ethos, also impact positively on attendance which is in line with the national average. The richness of the cultural diversity within the school community means that learners have first-hand experience of Christianity as multi-cultural world religion on a daily basis. In addition, links with Tinus School in South Africa further support pupils' appreciation of the role of the worldwide church in reducing poverty through education. RE makes a good contribution to the Christian character of the school and to learners' SMSC development. Learning in the subject also contributes to pupils' understanding of and respect for faiths other than Christianity. However, visits to places of worship do not reflect the range of religions studied, so limiting learners' appreciation of the diversity of ways faith is expressed. The school has identified this as an area requiring further development. Currently, the school lacks a shared interpretation of spirituality to inform its provision for learners to explore spirituality more deeply. As a consequence, experiences for pupils to reflect and respond are not consistently identified in the school's daily routines and curriculum as a whole, apart from collective worship.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is good**

Members of staff value worship as a time to collect together in a shared experience and appreciate the time for quiet reflection. Similarly, pupils value the experience of coming together as a community 'to show respect to God and to listen to stories.' Worship is planned systematically by the headteacher with support from the clergy at St Margaret's Church. This gives continuity and a clear focus on Christian beliefs and celebrations. Major Christian festivals are held in St Margaret's Church so enriching pupils' experience within worship and supporting the school's Christian character. Central themes for worship involve focusing on the school values in their Christian context through Bible stories which the pupils can apply to their own lives. In response, some pupils are able to link their fundraising for others who are less fortunate and describe their actions as 'showing God's love and compassion.' Pupils experience a range of leaders including the headteacher, staff and local clergy giving variety and interest through different worship approaches and styles. The last inspection report highlights the need for the school to enhance the evaluation of collective worship by involving pupils and governors. Pupils regularly give their views about worship and their feedback informs its future development. However, their involvement in planning and leading acts of worship independently is limited. As a consequence their appreciation of the significance of worship in their own lives is not yet fully appreciated. Some pupils recognise the importance of Jesus Christ within collective worship and his symbolic presence in the lighted candle. Whilst reference is made to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, pupils' understanding of the doctrine's significance to the Christian faith is at an early stage of development. Pupils' experience of prayer includes responsorial prayer, the Lord's Prayer, Grace at lunchtime and writing their own prayers. Some classes pray at the end of the day but this is not consistent across the school. In describing their understanding of prayer, a Year 2 pupil said that, 'Prayer helps us to know that God is with us.' Some pupils make use of prayer in their own lives and give examples of the ways in which their prayers have been answered. However, the provision for spontaneous prayer and reflection is not consistent across the school. This is hindering the school's promotion of life as a spiritual journey and pupils' capacity to explore their spirituality more deeply.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is good**

RE is regarded as a core subject within the curriculum and makes a valuable contribution to the school's Christian character and pupils' SMSC development. The school follows the Oxfordshire Agreed Syllabus. This enables pupils to appreciate the beliefs, practices and value systems of world religions in addition to Christianity. The diversity of cultures and languages within the school community provides a rich resource for first hand learning about religious faiths and practices. For example, in an RE lesson focusing on Judaism a parent and pupil talked jointly to the class about the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah. RE is well resourced with a range of artefacts supporting each religion taught. Across the school, the standard of teaching is consistently good. The teaching of Christianity enables pupils

to acquire a breadth of knowledge and understanding through the learning opportunities they have. For example, learners demonstrate a secure knowledge of a wide range of Bible stories and events in the life of Jesus Christ. Pupils readily apply their skills of enquiry, analysis and interpretation when considering the impact of religion on believers. This is exemplified in the example of a Year 6 lesson involving a debate around the issue of whether people should be allowed to wear religious clothing. Assessment in RE shows that standards of attainment compare well with other core subjects and are sometimes higher. Pupils' RE books show marking is routinely linked to the learning outcomes. However, the standard of written recording in the subject is not consistently high across the school and does not fully reflect coverage of the syllabus or the progress of pupils. Leadership of RE is shared by two subject leaders. Although relatively new to the role they are keen to develop the impact of RE on the curriculum as a whole. Monitoring and evaluation by subject leaders focuses on improving outcomes for all learners and involves foundation governors. This involves evaluation of planning, meetings with pupils, book monitoring and learning walks, resulting in the identification of priorities for development included in an action plan. A focus for development from the last inspection that clergy and pupils should discuss deep questions of faith and life has been well met. Different year groups have regular experiences to ask clergy big questions about such topics as being a Christian and what God is like.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good**

The headteacher is passionate in her vision to promote the school as a safe and inclusive church school community. 'A place where pupils flourish as a result of the nurture they receive. A place of spiritual preparation and academic rigour. A place where they acquire inner strength and a core belief in themselves to navigate their way through life.' Leaders are aware of the need to revise the school's current vision in order to fully reflect its Christian distinctiveness, rich diversity and core values of love, compassion and community. The school promotes good behaviour and its approach to anti-bullying is informed by the document Valuing All God's Children. Linked to its Christian ethos, the school seeks to provide a broad and balanced curriculum that promotes wellbeing and develops the whole child. As a result pupils make good progress and attain standards that are in line with or slightly above the national average in reading and maths. The school's funding of a part-time home school link worker in addition to the transition lead, is having a positive impact on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Though not reflected in governor minutes, these are both clear examples of the way in which the school's Christian values inform the governing body's strategic decision-making. This academic year, a more distributive leadership structure has been put in place with clear expectations and accountabilities. This restructuring is benefitting staff development for those with the potential to become leaders of church schools in the future. Leadership training for senior and middle leaders is also strengthening school effectiveness overall. Leadership of RE is in a transitional stage with joint subject leaders appointed in September 2017. Both RE and collective worship make a valuable contribution to the school's Christian ethos and meet the statutory requirements. Links with St Margaret's Church are mutually beneficial. For example, the church holds a weekly toddler service so forming relationships with families before their children start school. Clergy are frequent visitors into school offering pastoral support, leading collective worship, contributing to RE and serving on the governing body. Their presence is a visible reminder that God is at the centre of the school community. This also helps pupils to appreciate the role of the church in the local community. Parents are supportive of the school as a church school and recognise the value of its links with St Margaret's Church. Since the last inspection the structure of governance has not led to a consistent and sound evaluation of the school's effectiveness as a church school. Evaluations have lacked the rigour required to secure sustained improvement over this period of time.

SIAMS report January 2018 SS Philip and James Church of England VA Primary School Oxford OX2 6AB